

The Phases of a Pandemic

The phases described have been summarized from the World Health Organization (WHO) global influenza preparedness plan published in 2005. It is important to understand that the actual spread of the virus may or may not be described by these phases.

Interpandemic Period

Phase 1: No new influenza virus subtypes have been detected in humans. An influenza virus subtype that has caused human infection may be present in animals. If present in animals, the risk of human infection or disease is considered low.

Phase 2: No new influenza virus subtypes have been detected in humans. However, a circulating animal influenza virus subtype poses a substantial risk of human disease.

Pandemic Alert Period

Phase 3: Human infection(s) with a new subtype, but no human-to-human spread, or at most, rare instances of spread to a close contact.

Phase 4: Small cluster(s) with limited human-to-human transmission but spread is highly localized, suggesting that the virus is not well adapted to humans.

Phase 5: Large cluster(s) but human-to-human spread still localized, suggesting that the virus is becoming increasingly better adapted to humans, but may not yet be fully transmissible (substantial pandemic risk).

Pandemic Period

Phase 6: Pandemic increased and sustained transmission in general population.

*******Note of Explanation*******

The phases and assignment of responsibilities within the plan based on these phases are products of planning assumptions. As such, the checklists begin with phase 4 (as the current pandemic status as of July 2007 is phase 3) based on the assumption that the virus will appear in the Far East and enter the United States and Missouri as a human disease spreading human-to-human. However, the possibility remains that the novel virus could emerge within the United States, even in Missouri, rather than internationally. If a circulating animal virus subtype appears in Missouri (most likely as a High Pathogenic Avian Influenza in poultry), especially if human infections with this subtype occur (essentially phases 2 and 3 developing in state), this will precipitate a full-scale emergency response by Department of Health and Senior Services and local public health agencies, SEMA, Missouri Department of Agriculture, federal health and agricultural agencies, and impacted industries. This response process is contained in a separate Avian Influenza Plan.

An electronic copy of this document is available at www.dhss.mo.gov/PandemicPlan/PanFluPlan.html